

## **Star Quality, Report Card Programs Report Early Success**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE** – January 17, 2002

**CONTACT:** Paul Ladd, (615) 313-4707

**NASHVILLE** - Tennessee's new rating system for child care facilities, the Star Quality program is quickly becoming a success, according to the Tennessee Department of Human Services. Approximately 230 child care centers and homes are participating and more are expected to take part in the coming months.

"We're pleased at the number of providers who have chosen to participate in Star Quality," said Commissioner Natasha K. Metcalf, speaking at a news conference in Nashville. "This is an indication that the program is working, and working very well."

Metcalf said that proposed legislation to delay the beginning of the rated licensing system for two years is simply a bad idea. "We're surprised and dismayed that misguided efforts are being made to put off this program which already has shown so much promise for helping parents choose good quality care for their children--and for helping conscientious providers identify areas in their programs where they can improve. It makes no sense to dismantle now what we believe will be a national model for measuring and improving child care quality," stated the Commissioner.

Star Quality is a voluntary program that recognizes and encourages quality child care. Licensed child care homes and centers are evaluated on several criteria, including:

- Staff training, education and experience
- Compliance with state licensing rules
- Ratio of caregivers to children and group sizes
- Parental involvement
- An on-site assessment of activities and interaction between children and caregivers

Based on their evaluations, homes and centers can participate in the Star Quality program. Those participating can earn one, two or three stars based on the extent to which their program goes beyond the state's minimum licensing standards.

All licensed agencies are evaluated for the child care Report Card program each year. Those agencies meeting higher standards are then eligible for the Star Quality program. Evaluations began last August and by October of 2002, all licensed and regulated child care facilities in Tennessee will have received a Report Card. Report Cards are displayed prominently in child care homes and centers, so that parents and visitors can see them.

So far, 27 child care agencies have received one star; 108 have been awarded two stars; and 95 have earned the Three-Star designation.

“Choosing a child care program is one of the most important decisions parents have to make. Both of these programs are simply additional tools for parents to use in selecting the best possible care for their children and for providers to use in improving their programs,” Metcalf said.